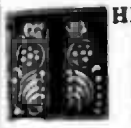
The Builder.

No. CCCCIII.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1850.



THE works in St. James's-park are progressing. The iron railing at the west end of what is known as the Enclosure has been put back, in a line parallel with the front of the Palace. The iron railing of part of the Green-park, opposite Stafford House, has also been altered, so as to be a continuation of that line, and make the ground opposite to the Palace into a regular form, opening into the Mall, the centre avenue of which will be exactly opposite to the centre of the Palace. The ground enclosed opposite Stafford House will be planted to correspond with that on the opposite side.

The Marble Arch has been taken down to the ground: every block has been numbered, and a drawing made of each course, with corresponding numbers on the blocks, so that they may be exactly replaced hereafter: should it be ultimately determined to re-erect the arch in the Mall near Stafford House, where, with a garden on either side of it, it would seem to form the commencement of the palace grounds, it will be a matter for regret that it was not moved to that position bodily, as might have been done without much difficulty.

In connection with this subject a series of designs for the improvement of the Park and some adjacent edifices have been submitted to us by Mr. Alfred Beaumont, architect. The object of the author is stated to be, to give more importance to St. James's-park, in consideration of its proximity to her Majesty's residence, and, at the same time, to benefit the public. The main features of the plan may be briefly mentioned. Beginning at Hyde-park-corner, the author proposes to convert the arch at the top of Constitution-hill into a royal entrance into the grounds of the Palace, adding a wing on each side of the arch, the eastern wing being for the admission of the public to the park, and the western wing to span Grosvenor-place and bring St. George's Hospital into the composition; to bring forward the marble arch about 200 feet, with a sunk area right and left to the Palace; to form a direct thoroughfare into the Park from St. James's-street by a way through St. James's Palace, the latter being added to and altered externally. This road would be continued across the enclosure, with a suspension-bridge over the water, into Birdcage-walk.

One principal feature in the scheme is to form an opening into the park from Charing-cross, as often urged by us, and it is this to which we would more particularly direct attention. To some of the previous suggestions there are objections: the alterations at Hyde-park-corner and in front of the Palace, for example, involve encroachments on the ground open to the public, against which, although comparatively small, we should feel bound to protest. Again, the proposed new road through St. James's Palace includes the transformation, if not destruction, of the ancient gateway, nearly the only remaining part of Henry the Eighth's original palace. We must not lightly yield our historical memorials. Good modern buildings may (the authorities willing and a proper course adopted) be obtained at any time; but our ancient landmarks for history, prompters of thought, stone story-tellers speaking the mind of earlier periods—the autographs of a nation (so to speak)—cannot be manufactured to order, or recovered when once suffered to fall away: the value of such things to the country cannot be calculated: and they should be watched by the country with the greatest jealousy, and maintained with the greatest care.

We have engraved Mr. Beaumont's design for the entrance to the park from Charing-cross, not because we think, any more than the author, probably, that it is the particular arrangement that should be carried into execution, before any other, for the proposed opening, but to bring the matter prominently before the public, and to show them what a vast improvement such an entrance would be, and, indeed, how much required it really is. It would form the entrance to the avenue leading up to the palace, and would bring into view from the avenue the statue of Charles I., Northumberland-house, and Trafalgar-square.

It would require the removal of the houses between Spring-gardens and Charing-cross, and a few others; but the cost of this would be met in part by the increased value which would be obtained for the ground remaining to be built on, as it would give room for the completion of Carlton-terrace, and provide an eligible site for a block of buildings of similar class, such as are shown on the right-hand side of our engraving.* The low buildings on the left-hand side, next Drummond's Banking House, are intended for fancy shops, to screen the backs of the houses in New-street, without interfering with light or air.

Mr. Beaumont includes in his general scheme the continuation of Pall Mall to the Green-park, by the removal of some houses on the north side of Cleveland-street, the advantage of which was long ago pointed out by us. He also proposes the formation of a lofty and convenient drive through the Horse Guards, in lieu of the present low and confined archway.

The Westminster improvements come naturally into view in any consideration of the means of bettering the approaches to the Palace, but what the commissioners are really doing there we are not in a position to say with certainty. We have been strongly urged, from more than one quarter, to bring before the public the new street which has been opened, and to point out the opportunities it affords for public buildings and private speculators; while, on the other hand, we have received forcible representations, impugning the proceedings of the commissioners, and gravely questioning their fitness for the duties which devolve on them. We may look further into it. Certain it is, that an *enormous* sum of money has been spent, with, at present, very little to show for it.

The want of a standing committee or commission for the improvement of the metropolis, to take advantage of such opportunities as occur, to preserve general concord in improvements, and to check injurious proceedings which are now constantly occurring, is greatly needed. At present, what is done by one party is undone by another, and new buildings are permitted to be put up which must be bought to be pulled down before long. Efforts to *beautify* the metropolis we need scarcely look for: the usefulness of the beautiful is not yet sufficiently felt; but the improvement of thoroughfares and the maintenance of open areas might be expected from the merest utilitarian. Every bad step is followed by a worse. Look at London-bridge: no sooner is a huge building erected to block up the Southwark end of the bridge, than another is commenced, next the Adelaide Hotel, on the City side. Thousands were spent to improve this part of London, to get good approaches and open the river, and now all the advantages gained are about to be sacrificed. Even the new Corporation buildings at Billingsgate appear to us to come nearer to the water's edge than seems desirable. The improvement of the banks of the Thames is much to be desired and often talked about, but the tendency of actual proceedings seems unfortunately quite the other way.

* See page 510.

SOME CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ELUCIDATION OF THE CONSTRUCTIVE DETAILS OF SANITARY ARCHITECTURE.*

FROM the defective state of our *drains* and *sewers*, the ramifications of which extend in countless lines throughout our large towns, a state of evil arises which in its consequences is fraught with appalling dangers to the health and lives of those who are placed within its influence. Dr S. Smith says he believes "the immediate and direct cause of fever to be a poison generated by the decomposition of animal and vegetable matters." Now, it is easy to conceive how defective drains and sewers, as well as that abominable contrivance the cesspool, may be said to be producers of fever, when it is considered that the substances arising from the exuviæ of the inhabitants of the houses, as well as the refuse of domestic preparations, are thrown into places, or endeavoured to be passed through drains, from which, owing to their defective construction, they are not speedily removed, but are allowed to remain and decompose, issuing forth from their foul alembics the seeds of disease and death. The following may be considered as a statement of the principal defects of town drainage. "In some places there are only open or surface drains, allowing exhalations freely to rise into the atmosphere, and these often are stagnant, by that more noisome. Even covered drains are often made with insufficient fall or declivity, and so become only extensive cesspools, contaminating the soil around them, and the atmosphere above them. Even with good street drains, there may be defects in the house drains, or in their connection with others, or in the sinks or water-closets: then the supply of water requisite to render the drains effective is often altogether wanting, or is obtainable only at an expense which the poorer inhabitants cannot afford." The few remarks which we are about to offer are on the subject of household drainage. Much has been written of late years, and with considerable effect, in drawing the attention of practical men to the consideration of the subject. In a short article like the present, we cannot be expected to enter into all the details of this subject, the various plans proposed, &c., but our remarks may be useful in directing attention to the essential requisites of effective house drainage.

And first as to the size of the drains. These should evidently be proportioned to the quantity of matter which will have to be conveyed through them. It is somewhat surprising to see the mistakes which were made, not so many years ago, on this point: size seemed to be the great end aimed at. But a "new light" has arisen on the subject: we now perceive that when a drain is too large for the matter which is to pass through it, the end we wish for is only the more difficult to be attained.† When the surface of a drain is extended, the water or fluid-sewage is lessened in bulk, and its motive power diminished; a sluggish movement being the inevitable result. Mr. Guthrie seems to have been amongst the first, who went vigorously to work, to expose the absurdity of the old method, and to introduce a more efficient and scientific system of house drainage. He says, "the grand object is so to proportion the drains that their supply

* See page 485, ante.

† Mistakes the other way have been made in recent times, and much inconvenience caused.

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